

## Airborne Troops Live Life on the Frontier

By Sgt. Mike Pryor  
2-82 Abn. Public Affairs

BAGHDAD - The sky has turned purple in the twilight, a gentle breeze is blowing, and Sgt. Adam Farmer has come outside to play his guitar. He sits on a plastic patio chair, a ball cap pulled low over his eyes, strumming a Dave Matthews song.

The music is so lulling, the warm breeze so pleasant, it would be easy to imagine he was someplace else. Maybe back in his hometown of Muskogee, Okla., playing songs on the front porch.

Then three loud explosions rip through the evening calm. Farmer pauses, mentally calculates the distance of the blasts, and goes back to playing his guitar.

The explosions are a reminder: this isn't anywhere else. This is East

Baghdad, less than a half mile from Sadr City, the heart of the Shi'ite militia army. And paratroopers from the 82nd Airborne Division are right in the middle of it.

Coalition Outpost Ford, located in the Al Beida neighborhood of Baghdad's Adhamiyah District, has been home to a company of paratroopers from 2nd Battalion, 325th Airborne Infantry Regiment, 2nd Brigade Combat Team since late February.

The new Baghdad security plan, dubbed Fardh Al-Qanoon in Arabic - meaning "enforcing the law," has put thousands more U.S. Soldiers on the ground in areas throughout the city, but few are as far forward as the paratroopers at COP Ford.

"Seeing as how we're surrounded on all sides, I'd say we're about as forward as we can

get," said 1st Lt. Paul Benfield, of Old Town, Fla.

### Our Own Little Castle

The sun was up and it was starting to bake. Sgt. Ilya Kopach, of Brooklyn, N.Y., was manning a .50-caliber machine gun on one of COP Ford's rooftop guard positions. Beyond Kopach's bunker, the maze-like streets of Al Beida stretched out into the horizon. Not 25 yards away, a woman was on her roof hanging laundry. Twelve-foot-high blast walls were all that separated her house from the COP.

"This is like our own little castle," Kopach said.

Kopach's analogy is one of the more common ones that come up when people try to describe the experience of a coalition outpost. The idea, according to counterinsurgency

theory, is to live among the people in order to pacify them.

COP Ford's commander, Capt. Dennis Marshall, of Hinckley, Ohio, was a history major in school. He can site precursors to the COP from throughout the ages.

"This is nothing new. Hadrian did it. The U.S. did it all throughout the west," Marshall said.

Marshall is as comfortable telling off-color anecdotes as he is dropping references to 7th century Roman emperors.

Marshall's leadership style seems a perfect fit for COP Ford, which lacks the rigid formality of other larger base camps. The circumstances don't permit it. There are no showers, no hot chow and

See **Frontier** Page 5



(Photo by Sgt. Raymond Kokel, 1-1 Cav. Public Affairs)

### New Pack of Wolves

Incoming troops from Wolves Team Rotation 9 of the Macedonian Special Forces "Wolves" Battalion stand with their national colors after receiving the flag from Wolves Team Rotation 8 - facing them - during a transfer of authority ceremony at Camp Taji, Iraq June 9.

## Operation Nets Weapons Cache, Nab Four Suspects

2-2 Inf. Public Affairs

FORWARD OPERATING BASE LOYALTY, Iraq - Multi-National Division - Baghdad Soldiers recovered a weapons cache and seized four suspects during a security operation June 9 in the Kamaliyah area of eastern Baghdad.

Soldiers with the 2nd Brigade Combat Team, 2nd Infantry Division's Company B, 2nd Battalion, 16th Infantry Regiment, based out of Fort Riley, Kan., recovered 23 120mm rockets, 21 107mm

rockets, 20 pounds of propellant, three mines, two 155mm artillery rounds and more than 150 rounds of assorted ammunition.

An explosive ordnance team was called in and conducted a controlled detonation to destroy the munitions seized. The four suspects detained are being held for further questioning.

Iraqi Security Forces and Coalition Forces continue security operations aimed at reducing sectarian violence and ensuring the safety of residents of the Iraqi capital.



(Photo by Staff Sgt. Bronco Suzuki, 2-2 Inf. Public Affairs)

## Leap of Faith

Staff Sgt. Branden Velazquez, of Company B, 2nd Battalion, 12th Infantry Regiment, 2nd Infantry Brigade Combat Team, 2nd Infantry Division, vaults over a wall on a rooftop during a clearing operation in the Al Doura area of Baghdad.

## Attack Aviation Destroys Building Housing Homemade Explosives

By Sgt. 1st Class Rick Emert  
1st ACB Public Affairs

CAMP TAJI, Iraq - Multi-National Division - Baghdad attack helicopter crews destroyed a building where homemade explosives were being produced June 9 south of Baghdad.

Apache helicopter crews from the 1st "Attack" Battalion, 227th Aviation Regiment, 1st Air Cavalry Brigade, 1st Cavalry Division, observed metal roof panels with a white substance on them near a building at approximately 7:20 p.m.. After reporting the find to the ground unit and getting clearance

to fire, the Apache crews engaged the panels and observed a secondary explosion.

Based on the size of the secondary explosion, the ground unit gave clearance for the Apache teams to fire on the nearby building. A secondary explosion from within the building confirmed that it was used to manufacture homemade explosives, possibly to be used in improvised explosive devices.

"This reconnaissance find shows the ...incredible teamwork and efforts taking place in the fight to reduce the flow of IED materials into Baghdad," said Lt. Col. Christopher Walach, 1-227th commander.

## Baghdad in Brief

### Bomb Damages Mosque

BAGHDAD- Iraqi National Police responded to an attack on a Sunni mosque in the Rashid District in southwest Baghdad June 8.

The 1st Battalion, 3rd Brigade, 1st Iraqi National Police Division cordoned off the surrounding area after the Al Fattah Pasha Mosque had been destroyed by an explosive device. The mosque, located in Bayaa, suffered substantial damage during the explosion, but no there were no casualties.

MND-B forces and NPs secured the area and gathered evidence following the attack.

The incident is under investigation.

### Arabic Phrase of the Day

*silim*

**Defined:  
peace**

### Iraq 3-Day Weather Report



Today

High: 108  
Low: 80



Tomorrow

High: 109  
Low: 83



Wednesday

High: 108  
Low: 83

**Commanding General:** Maj. Gen. Joseph F. Fil, Jr.  
**Public Affairs Officer:** Lt. Col. Scott Bleichwehl  
**Command Information Supervisor:** Master Sgt. Dave Larsen  
**NCOIC, Print Production:** Sgt. Michael Garrett  
**Editor:** Spc. Jeffrey Ledesma  
**Staff Writers:** Sgt. Nicole Kojetin, Spc. L.B. Edgar, Spc. Shea Butler, Pfc. Ben Gable and Pfc. William Hatton  
**Contributing Writers:** Sgt. 1st Class Rick Emert, Staff Sgt. Jon Cupp,

Sgt. Mike Pryor and Spc. Courtney Marulli  
**Contact the *Daily Charge* at VOIP 242-4093, DSN 318-847-2855 or e-mail [david.j.larsen@mnd-b.army.mil](mailto:david.j.larsen@mnd-b.army.mil).**

*The Daily Charge* is an authorized publication for members of the U.S. Army. Contents of the *Daily Charge* are not necessarily official views of, or endorsed by, the U.S. Government, Department of Defense, Department of the Army or the 1st Cavalry Division. All editorial content of the *Daily Charge* is prepared, edited, provided and approved by 1st Cavalry Division Public Affairs Office.

# Iraqi's Practice Democracy in Zafaraniya

By Spc. Courtney Marulli  
2-2 Inf. Public Affairs

FORWARD OPERATING BASE LOYALTY, Iraq - The Zafaraniya community saw democracy in action as they hosted a neighborhood advisory council member election June 1 at the Wadi Al-Ain School, which drew approximately 1,000 voters.

The vote was completely run by local officials. Fawzi Dawood, a council member and election center manager, said this marked the third election for Zafaraniya. The first was on May 29, 2003 after the fall of Saddam Hussein's regime and again in January 2005.

The election highlighted a turning point as two muhallas, or neighborhoods, now have neighborhood council representation, Dawood said.

"This election is special for Zafaraniya as it increases the activities of the members and consequently increases the services to the citizens of Zafaraniya in general and the Hay Al-Zafaraniya, in particular," he said. "It will increase the momentum for the members and intensify the cooperation, the enthusiasm and the continued work of the members and the community."

Six candidates ran for two open positions, and after all ballots were cast and videotaped for authenticity, the winners were Jasim Sakran Muohmed and Muohmed Abass.

1st Lt. John Lee of the 2nd Battalion, 17th Field Artillery, 2nd Brigade Combat Team, 2nd Infantry Division, who arrived to give added protection while the voting was underway, said Muohmed won by a landslide with 451 votes.

"Mr. Fawzi wished to thank the Iraqi Army and the Iraqi Police for providing security and mentioned Col. Khalid, the Zafaranyah IP commander by name, indicating that he was there for the entire process," Lee said of the 1st Battalion, 4th Brigade, 1st Iraqi Army Division. "It was a great success for everyone."

In order for voting information to get out to the people, Dawood said advertisements were placed in schools, mosques, markets and along main roads and intersections.

"In my opinion, the election went very

***"I felt that the voters felt secure with the presence of the (Iraqi Army)."***

**Maj. Qasim  
1st Bn., 4th Bde., 1st Iraqi Army Div.**  
smooth and was very good," Dawood said.

Iraqi Security Forces, along with help from sheiks, civil organizations and other community leaders, allowed voters to place their ballots in a safe environment, Dawood said. All the citizens were searched when they came in to ensure everyone's safety.

"I felt that the voters felt secure with the presence of the IA," Dawood said, stressing the help of Maj. Qasim of the 1-4-1st IA.

Support for the election was also given by the Karadah District Council chair, Dr. Muhammad and Ahmad Ulga, the Zafaraniya Neighborhood Advisory Council chairman and Lt. Col. Wayne Grieme, the commander of 2nd Battalion,



(U.S. Army photo)

**Citizens of the Zafaraniya community hosted a neighborhood advisory council member election at the Wadi Al-Ain School in Baghdad June 1.**

17th Field Artillery, Dawood said.

"I wish there will be completely new election for all the (neighborhood advisory councils) and the (district advisory councils), providing no entry to the militias and party members in these councils," Dawood said. "I thank everyone who helped us in this process and taught us democracy, freedom and respect."



(Photo by Sgt. Jack Androski, 1-5 Cav. Regt.)

## Touching with Technology

Children from the Mansour Institute of Education, a school for children with disabilities, enjoy their new computer lab which was donated to them by troops from the 1st Battalion, 5th Brigade, 6th Iraqi Army Division. The computer lab is a community education initiative that Iraqi Army battalion has created to improve educational standards in the Mansour neighborhood of Baghdad.

## Estonian Minister of Defense Visits "Stone Platoon"

By Staff Sgt. Jon Cupp  
1-1 Cav. Public Affairs

CAMP TAJI, Iraq - For more than six months, an Estonian platoon known as the "Stone Platoon," has been working with troops from the 1st Brigade Combat Team, 1st Cavalry Division conducting combat operations together in the village of Sab Al Bor, Iraq.

These partners shared a rare opportunity to meet the Estonian Minister of Defense Jaak Aaviksoo here June 8.

During the visit, Aaviksoo talked with Estonian troops and Soldiers from Troop B, 1st Squadron, 7th Cavalry Regiment - who work alongside the Estonian soldiers every day. Aaviksoo also exchanged gifts with senior leadership in the 1st BCT.

In a presentation at the Camp Taji Theater, Aaviksoo took part as Estonian troops and Soldiers of "Garryowen" presented each other with awards-with the 1st Squadron, 7th Cavalry Regiment presenting traditional Cavalry spurs to their Estonian partners while

several Garryowen troops received the Estonian Distinguished Service Medal.

"The traditional earning of the spurs comes with service in the Cav. as the organization goes to war," said Lt. Col. Kevin MacWatters, upon presenting the spurs to the Estonians. "Wear these spurs with honor."

"You can definitely see a good interaction between our two countries, and this is very important to our nation" said Estonian Army Col. Neeme Vali, the Chief of the General Staff for the Estonian Army, who presented Estonian Distinguished Service Medals to Soldiers in Garryowen. "Now it's time for the Estonians to say thank you to the U.S."

The minister then took the opportunity to speak to those in attendance.

"We're not very numerous and our country is not very big, but we suffered under totalitarianism for 50 years and we don't want that to ever be repeated," said Aaviksoo during his opening comments.

"The modern world is getting smaller all the time and the ideals of democracy are just as important to us as they are to the local Iraqi people here.

"This is not an easy mission here, and you know that better than I do," added Aaviksoo addressing his troops and the Soldiers from the 1st Squadron, 7th Cavalry Regiment. "But the goal of the joint multinational forces is to help bring peace and democracy to Iraq. I have seen your focus and commitment to that goal."

In cordon and searches, mounted and dismounted patrols and other joint operations with U.S. troops and Iraqi security forces, the Estonian troops have assisted in the detaining of more than 37 insurgents. They also assisted in the conducting of convoy operations and traffic control checkpoints along with the finding of many weapons caches and improvised explosive device-making materials. In all, they have been on 148 patrols, some of which were up to 48 hours long.

Aaviksoo concluded his

speech with praise for the achievements of the partnership.

"I thank you for your commitment and we all look forward to your continued success in Iraq," said Aaviksoo. "I wish you every success and I wish you luck, without it, it will be hard to achieve your goals."

From the Taji Theater, Aaviksoo traveled to the Estonian platoon's area on the base camp where he viewed a static display of both Estonian and American weapons. Afterwards, he ate lunch with the Stone Platoon.

Estonian Sgt. Juri Lapko said the experience was worthwhile and meant a lot to him and his fellow troops.

"It's good that our leaders remember what Estonian soldiers are doing here, and that they recognize we are in Iraq doing a very important job for Estonia," said Lapko, a humvee gunner. "And that what we are doing here will be good for the future of the Iraqis."

"They are full partners with no restrictions on how their soldiers participate in operations and they're just like a part of our platoon," said MacWatters. "They bring their own counterinsurgency skills and always add to the capabilities of the unit. We have a great partnership here."

"They're unbelievable," said Killeen, Texas native Sgt. Nicholas Anderson, a scout with Troop B, 1st Squadron, 7th Cavalry Regiment. "We've gone on a lot of missions with them and they're good with tactics, they're very proficient and definitely know their stuff, and I'm extremely excited to be over here with them."



(Photo by Staff Sgt. Jon Cupp, 1-1 Cav. Public Affairs)

The Estonian Minister of Defense Jaak Aaviksoo addresses the Estonian "Stone Platoon" at Camp Taji, Iraq during a June 8 visit.

# East Baghdad Coalition Outpost Home to Paratroopers

## Frontier

From Page 1

no laundry, but there are no salutes and no parade-ground politesse, either. Weapons are always locked and loaded. It is a place where a grunt can feel at home.

"Out here, we can really focus on what we're supposed to do," said Kopach.

Out at the COP, only the essentials are important, said Staff Sgt. Jason Cabrera, a scout-sniper from Orlando, Fla. What matters is how clean your weapon is, not how clean your uniform is. It's a philosophy the troops at COP Ford have embraced whole-heartedly.

The COP strategy has risks. COP Ford's isolation makes it more vulnerable to attack than other bases. But Marshall said he is confident his troops can take whatever the enemy throws at them.

"I sleep very good at night, because I know there's a paratrooper up on the roof who can hit anything he aims at," he said.

### **They Feel Safer With Us Here**

The community of Al Beida doesn't just stop at COP Ford's walls, it comes right over them. American music the paratroopers play inside is often drowned out by the call to prayer emanating from a nearby mosque.

Every day brings hundreds of interactions between the U.S. forces and the local community; from brief hellos to two-hour long lunches. And each one is important to the paratroopers' mission.

"You've got to have the people by your side," said Spc. David Higuera, of Phoenix.

They know the old man who puts his chair out against the wall of the local girl's school and sits there all day. They know the shop owner who went to medical school. They know the woman who keeps a picture of the Virgin Mary on her living room wall, even though she's a Muslim.

That knowledge, they hope, will eventually help them defeat the enemy.

"If you say, 'Hey, let's go patrol this area,' no one is going to tell you anything that day. It's when you've patrolled it every day for three weeks that you start to get information," said Benfield.

It is a challenge for the paratroopers, who are trained to seize airfields, not police neighborhoods.

One afternoon, Benfield's platoon was

sent to the house of a young married couple who were complaining about threats from their neighbors. Benfield talked to the couple at their kitchen table, next to a half-eaten plate of cucumbers and the paratroopers say they are starting to see the results of the strategy.

"People tell us, 'I let my kids play out in the street now.' They feel safer with us here," said Spc. Christian Tobler, of Sachse, Texas.

### **On the Offensive**

Although residents feel safer in their neighborhood some attacks still occur. Despite those attacks, there is no siege mentality at COP Ford. In the paratroopers' way of thinking, a good offense is the best defense.

"We could sit here and wait for them to attack us, or we could go out and take them off the streets," said Spc. Zachry King, of Jacksonville, Fla. "What do you think we're going to do?"

Using the information they pick up during their day patrols, the paratroopers spend their nights conducting hard-hitting operations against criminals in Al Beida.

An operation the paratroopers mounted April 26 was a typical example. The plan was to conduct a quick succession of raids against militia leaders in six different houses. All the targets had previously fought against coalition forces in Sadr City.

The mission began at two in the morning. Marshall sent one mounted platoon, led by 1st Lt. Derrick Syed, from Jersey City, N.J., to hit the farthest of the first three targets. He accompanied Benfield's platoon on foot to hit the other two. The raids were supposed to go off simultaneously.

The paratroopers moved silently through the ghostly streets until they arrived at the objective. Benfield split the platoon in two. The team led by platoon sergeant Sgt. 1st Class Thomas Applegate took the house on the left. They used bolt cutters to breach the first gate. Inside the courtyard, they found a second, sturdier door.

"Shotgun breach." The words were passed back in a whisper.

Seconds later - BLAM! - the shotgun blew a hole around the door, and the paratroopers swarmed inside. Minutes later the house was secure. They put the suspects they detained in the living room and began searching for evidence.

Just across the street, Benfield had led his

team into the other target house and took two other suspects into custody.

As the suspects were being taken out and loaded into humvees, there was a huge explosion, followed by the RAT-TAT-TAT of gunfire.

"Get the detainees back inside!" shouted Marshall.

The paratroopers pushed them back into the kitchen. Marshall yanked his radio operator into the garden, trying to get a situation report from his other platoon. No one knew where the fire was coming from. Syed's platoon was only a few blocks away.

"Delta-Two-Six, are you engaged?" Marshall asked him over the radio.

"I don't know, but there are a lot of bullets flying around," Syed replied.

Sgt. William Kok, of Sacramento, Calif., sprinted upstairs to set up a fighting position for his team on the roof.

"Hell yeah!" he exclaimed, taking the steps two at a time. He was ready for a fight.

Outside, Sgt. Joshua Dover, of Phoenix, took cover behind a car parked on the side of the road. The gunfire seemed to be rolling towards him.

"Sounds like it's coming this way," he said, sighting his M-4 down the street.

Then, just as quickly as it began, it was over. The explosions turned out to be coming from a coordinated ambush on an Iraqi Army unit traveling parallel to the two U.S. platoons. The Iraqi troops had fought through it and continued moving.

Calm returned. Noncommissioned officers went around checking their personnel, coming out of the darkness to put a hand on their shoulder.

"You up?" they asked.

As soon as everyone was accounted for, the platoon picked up and moved out. They still had two houses to hit before the night was over.

By daybreak, it was all finished. The final tally of the raids was nine detainees, an assortment of weapons and several huge trash bags full of hard drives, computer discs, and other evidence. Back at Ford, the paratroopers worked until mid-morning processing it all.

Finally, it was done, and the weary paratroopers dragged themselves off to bed. The COP was quiet.

Out on the patio, a single person was stirring. It was Farmer, quietly plucking his guitar strings, dreaming of Muskogee.